



Al-Risala 1985

March

Editorial

Henry Lee Lucas, 48, now under sentence of death in Texas, U.S.A., is reputed to be the worst mass killer in U.S. history. He is one of a relatively new phenomenon that the Federal Bureau of Investigation dubs "serial murderers": those who kill people, one by one, in various parts of the country and by various methods, without motivation or provocation. To date 144 of his "serial slayings" have been verified but Lucas, as William Scobie writes in the *London Observer* (30 September 1984), "boasts of committing 360 murders from coast to coast by virtually every known method: stabbing, shooting, strangulation, mutilation, decapitation and more."

Now the FBI plans to take Lucas on a "gruesome, nationwide tour... not to be brought to trial, but to guide police to the sites of his killings and so close the books on hundreds of unsolved murders." And Lucas is not the only serial killer at work in the U.S.A ... According to figures released by the FBI; serial murderers like him slaughtered some 5,000 Americans in 1983, and will kill as many in 1984. An interesting fact related to serial killing is that it is an almost exclusively American epidemic. Around the rest of the world, according to Interpol, no more than 50 serial killers have been identified over the past 20 years.

Investigations of this epidemic, and why it is confined especially to America, generally end up with the conclusion that it is the obsession with guns that prevails in America which lies at the root of serial killings and mass killings in that country. But the fact that Lucas used other methods besides guns to perpetrate his crimes would seem to suggest that the cause lies deeper in the very nature of American society.

The United States is undoubtedly the richest nation on earth. It is also, as H.L. Mencken observed, "to my eye the greatest show on earth." It is a show in which fame and popular acclaim are glorified beyond all proportion. That is fine for the lucky few who become famous; it is all right for those, who are content to idolize the famous. But it is bound to lead to frustration in people who do not fit into either of these two roles; in extreme cases it leads to people resorting to desperate means of attaining fame, such as killing people on a large scale. When they do this their names appear in the headlines; they are taken on nation-wide tours; they can even "boast" of how many people they have killed. Fame, which is the aim of the American "show", has been achieved.

The urge to be acknowledged and acclaimed is a natural one in human beings, but Islam teaches one to channel it towards the next, eternal world, rather than this transitory one. When one does this one lives within a positive framework, for it is only positive actions which can lead one to success in the next world. Where worldly fame is considered the supreme aim in life, one is bound to become jealous and resentful if one does not achieve it. It is then that such horrific methods as "serial killing" are resorted to. Whereas if obedience to God is the supreme objective, no such idea could even begin to take shape in the human mind.

Reverence and its Object

When a famous American player, Carl Lewis, won a long jump competition held at Los Angeles on June 22, 1984 he was so overwhelmed with gratitude at his victory that he could not resist paying homage to the track he had run on.

The urge to identify and acknowledge one's benefactor and the longing to shower him with one's feelings of deep gratitude is inherent in human nature. This is common to all: to rich and poor, to young and old.

According to psychiatrists, this emotion is not only the deepest of all emotions but is also so interwoven in human nature that it is inseparable from it.

This is the urge, in actual fact, to find God, the creator of man, and bow before Him. It is ingrained in man in order that he should be able to recognize and worship Him.

Man, however, digresses from the path of nature. The recognition and submission which is actually due to God is given instead to His creatures.

Man feels inclined to adopt someone or something as his 'God', since the true Deity remains invisible to the naked eye; it is a human failing that he takes more readily to visible or tangible objects. Thus what God alone is worthy of is offered to someone or something else.

Thus the correct focusing of one's emotions is monotheism as opposed to polytheism. The former should be their only true outlet.

The Domain of Religion, not Science

Two books have recently been published in the U.S. which look, from a scientific angle, at the human side of death. One of them, *On Children and Death*, is written by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who drew her material from work with the families of dying children. The second work is written by Colin Murray Parkes, a senior lecturer in psychiatry at the London Hospital Medical College, and Robert S. Weiss, a professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts. Entitled, *Recovery from Bereavement*, the book grew out of work done over ten years ago by the Harvard Bereavement Study. It looks at the way widows and widowers under 45 mourn their losses, and asks the question: Why do some get over their grief, while others do not? Both books, then, are the result of entirely scientific research.

Do these books succeed in their aim of offering consolation to those who have been robbed of their near and dear? Suzanne Fields, reviewing both works in the *Washington Post*, thinks not. These two new books by these priests of science and reason, she writes, address the griefs and protocols of dealing with the dead and dying. Well-meaning books both, concerned with offering practical psychological advice as well as solace, they nevertheless – perhaps inevitably – are useful but not elevating, sensible but never soaring. Grounded in the earth of observation, they are offered to wounded spirits that crave not advice but inspiration.” (*Guardian Weekly*, January 1, 1984).

The reason for the failure of these books is that they attempt to tackle scientifically a problem that can only be dealt with by religion. It is only by realizing that death – far from being the end of life – is the beginning of real life that we can begin to cope with the distress and suffering that death leaves in its wake. We have been allotted a short while in this world so that we may be put to the test: we are required to realize here that, though we seem to have power, we are in fact helpless before the will of God; though we seem to have possessions and attachments, everything belongs to Him. It is only those who feel they own something who fear its loss; if one believes that everything and everybody is owned by God, then what is there to lose?

The Cause Lies Within

People tend to try and blame others for setbacks in life. But this only serves to exacerbate the problem. A solution can only be found if one searches within oneself – for that is where the cause of one's problems lies.

Usually people afflicted with some misfortune seek to lay the blame for it on someone else besides themselves. Having picked their scapegoat, whether it be an individual or an entire nation, they then make it the target of their vengeance. Though every nation has, to a certain degree, become prey to this knee-jerk mentality, it seems to have affected the Muslims more than others. Whenever some calamity befalls them they lay the blame for it on some person or nation besides themselves and embark on a campaign of retaliation which only exacerbates the problem. Yet, as bearers of the true and authentic divine scripture, they should know better: they should realize, for it is a point that has been emphasised in the Quran, that whatever good befalls one on earth is from God, and whatever evil afflicts one should be attributed to faults within oneself. On no account should blame be laid at the door of other human beings.

In one place the Quran tells us that: "Whatever good befalls you, it is from God; and whatever ill, from yourself." (3:79) In another place we are told that: "If a misfortune befalls you, it is the fruit of your own labours. He forgives much." (42:30) These verses show that God has created this world in such a way that here no one holds sway over others. It does not lie within a human being's power to harm other human beings. Whatever harm befalls one, then, is the outcome of one's own actions. It is better to seek out the root-cause of difficulties within oneself than in the world outside. It is within one's own self that one will be able to find the cause of one's troubles, and only when one knows the cause will one be able to find a solution.

On two occasions in particular, when the Muslims were afflicted by misfortune in the time of the Prophet, they were advised to adopt a self-critical and introspective attitude. One was the Battle of Uhud (3AH) in which the Muslims were defeated, and the other was the Battle of Hunayn (8AH) in which they suffered an early setback. The blame for these reversals could have been laid at the door of the enemies of Islam, but it was not; it was the Muslims themselves whom the Quran held responsible.

The Quran cites the cause of the Muslims' defeat in the Battle of Uhud as disunity and disobedience of the high command. Here is the full verse revealed in this regard:

"God fulfilled His pledge to you when, by His leave, you went on killing them. But afterwards your courage failed you, discord reigned among you, and you disobeyed (the Prophet) after he had brought you within view of what you wished for. Some chose the gain of this world, and others the world to

come. Then he made you turn away from them in order to test you. But now He has forgiven you, for He is gracious to the faithful.” (3:152)

As for Hunayn, the reason for the calamity which overtook the Muslims there was stated to be vanity, again within the Muslims themselves:

“God has helped you on many a battlefield. In the Battle of Hunayn you set great store in your numbers, but they availed you nothing: the earth, for all its vastness, seemed to close in upon you and you turned your backs and fled.” (9:25)

What could have been done, in both these cases, was the blame to be assigned entirely to the Quraish. The Muslims could have been exonerated of all blame, but instead it was laid fairly and squarely on their own shoulders. Thus God made an example of these incidents, showing future generations of Muslims what their reaction to such setbacks should be: instead of trying to make out that others are plotting against them, they should practice some introspection. Victory against their enemies can only be accomplished if the cause of weakness within the Muslims themselves is removed.

For further clarification of this point; let us have a look at a letter sent by the Caliph Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz to a subordinate military officer, Mansur Ibn Ghalib, whom he had sent to the war front:

“Fear God under any circumstances, for fear of God is the best preparation, the best tactic and the best strength. If you want to save yourself from the enemy, then you had better save yourself from sin; for more dangerous than enemy plots are, I believe, one’s own sins. We only triumph over our enemies because of their sinfulness. If it was not for this, we would not enjoy ascendancy over them, for they are more numerous than us, and better prepared for battle. If we become equal to them in sinfulness then they will gain ascendancy over us due to their greater numbers and strength. We will not then be able to triumph over them with the resources at our disposal. You may fear the enmity of others. But you should be even more fearful of your own sins. “

Again, the point that is being emphasised here is that human failure is always caused by faults within, not outside, the individual or group concerned. The fact of the matter is that we are living in a world which belongs, not to any human being, but to God. Only He has any power in this world. No individual or nation holds any real sway over another. This means that whatever one obtains in this world comes – in reality – from God, irrespective of the apparent source from which it emanates. Likewise, when one is deprived of something, it is God who has really taken it away from one, even though it may seem to have been someone else. Wise then is the one who in both cases turns to God.

In various parts of the world today Muslims are oppressed. All are seeking one way of escape from their predicament, and that is through violent protest against their oppressors. This is an entirely unIslamic form of reaction. It is not the attitude that the Quran has taught us to adopt. As Muslims, it is part of our faith to believe that everything that happens on earth is the work of God. The oppression to which we are being subjected is also His work. It is to Him, then, that we should turn for release from our

suffering. God does not cause His servants to stumble for no reason. It must be some fault, some shortcoming within ourselves, which has made us the target of oppression and exploitation. Only if we find out what it is and set about eliminating it, will we once more be entitled to God's favour.

The Muslims are like people being pelted with missiles from above, but they are looking at the ground to see where the missiles are coming from. They are searching in the wrong place, so how can they be expected to remove themselves from the line of fire?

7 March 1985

Recognition

This was probably the year 1930. Mr. Sharfuddin was teaching in George Islamia High School (Gorakhpur), which was later on upgraded to the level of College. He was a very intelligent and able teacher. An English inspector, one day, came to inspect his class. At that time, Mr. Sharfuddin was taking an English class. The inspector entered the class and listened to the lecture attentively. While preparing his inspection report, he wrote:

I did not inspect the class of Mr. Sharfuddin. I actually attended it. He is so able a teacher.

In Pursuit of a Purpose

James Hatfield, an Englishman from the town of Bury St Edmunds, was in his youth dogged by heart disease. His experience imbued him with sympathy for those suffering in a similar way, and he was moved to do something to relieve their plight. The idea that came to him was a round the world yacht trip, single-handed, with the aim of raising £100,000 in aid of heart and cancer patients.

In the summer of 1984 he commenced his journey, heading first for Capetown in South Africa, then Australia, and finally across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans back to the port of Ipswich, from which he had set sail. In the South Atlantic, however, his boat met with an accident: it struck what he thought was a "ship container" and the rudder was badly damaged. Besides this, James Hatfield was himself seriously injured: he had been cooking coffee in the cabin at the time of collision and the freshly brewed beverage spilt on his leg, causing severe burns.

He set about steering his damaged ship into the nearest harbour, which happened to be Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. There he gave an interview to the BBC Radio programme "Outlook" When asked about the injury to himself, which sounded very severe, he said: "It was very painful, but I was so preoccupied with steering my boat into port that I forgot all about it."

James Hatfield forgot about the injury to himself because he had before him a purpose which superceded it. The pain that he was suffering was of no consequence to him, because he was on a journey to relieve the pain of others. If he did not successfully steer his damaged boat into port, so that it could undergo repairs, then his whole purpose would be thwarted; his journey would come to a premature end and the benefits that he had hoped would accrue from it would fail to materialize.

So it is with anyone who has before him a supreme purpose in life: he overlooks harm that has been done to himself and relentlessly continues in pursuance of his goal. He knows that involvement in relatively petty side issues will only serve to detract from his main purpose, and hinder his advance towards its achievement.

The purpose that spurred James Hatfield on was a desire to relieve the temporary suffering of others in this world. The Muslims, as a community, should be moved by an even greater purpose – the urge to save mankind from abiding suffering in the next world. If, on their journey through life, they suffer injury or harm at the hands of others, then they should overlook it and continue to seek their goal. Not only will their injuries fade into insignificance: the great task with which they have been entrusted will also be achieved.

An Eye for a Talent

When the Industrial magnate, G.D. Birla (1894-1983), was thirty years old, he received a letter from an unknown student in Calcutta. This is what the student, in an informal and forthright manner, had written:

If only you can help me with an amount of Rs. 22,000 for the purchase of a special type of instrument which has to be imported, I may assure you that I may be able to get the Nobel Prize for my discovery.

The effect of this appeal was immediate. Mr. Birla replied to the student's letter at once, enclosing a cheque for Rs. 22,000. With this amount the student ordered the instrument he needed from abroad and carried on with his research. His estimate proved correct. When the results of his research came before the public, he won such acclaim that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for science.

This student was the very person who later became known to the world as Sir C.V. Raman. When he had won the Nobel Prize and been knighted, his brilliance was appreciated by one and all. But to appreciate his talent when he was just an ordinary student, when all his greatness was still hidden in future, was an extremely difficult thing to do, but G.D.Birla did it, and that is why his name is high on the list of the architects of modern India.

This quality displayed by Mr. Birla, not only raises individuals to greatness; it also has a great part to play in the national uplift. If there are appreciative and sympathetic people like Birla in a nation, one can rest assured that the talent of its youth will not die out. Talented young people can hope to be provided with all they need to cultivate their latent potential. But if there is no one who appreciates talent in this way, then the only people to advance in society will be those who happen to secure some high official position; and clearly no nation can have more than a few such positions to offer.

When Friends Forsake on

When the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was assassinated in the early hours of Wednesday, October 31, 1984 it was two members of her own bodyguard who delivered the lethal shots. Sub Inspector Beant Singh, the elder of the two assassins, had been a trusted member of her bodyguard for eight years. Mrs. Gandhi had trusted him so much that when - a few months before the murder - a foreign reporter asked her whether she felt safe with Sikhs guarding her, she pointed to the young officer and said: "How could I not trust a man like this?" (*The Muslim Daily*, Islamabad, November 2, 1984). According to *Newsweek* magazine "Beant Singh was so trusted that he regularly was selected to drive Mrs. Gandhi's grandchildren to school." (November 12, 1984).

When such betrayal occurs in the world, everyone stands up in protest and abhorrence. Yet they would be even more shocked were they to realize that every relationship, every attachment, every dependence of one human being upon another, is doomed to end in much the same way. When a crisis occurs which affects one party in the relationship personally then he will forsake the other; if it is a crisis for which he holds the other responsible, then he will become the enemy of the other, who was before his trusted, and trusting, friend.

The Day of Judgment, when all mankind will have to answer for their actions before the Lord of the Universe, will be such a crisis afflicting the whole of the human race. There all relationships which were based on worldly factors will disappear. Everyone will be concerned with his or her own fate. Even "every suckling mother shall forsake her infant, every pregnant female shall deliver her burden, and you shall see mankind reeling like drunkards although not drunk; but dreadful will be God's chastisement." (Qur'an, 22:2). "Each man will forsake his brother, his mother and father, his wife and his children; for each one of them will on that day have enough concern of his own." (80:34-37)

The only relationship to survive - the crisis of that day will be one which was based on common submission to God. Only those who had a mutual concern to please God, and earn redemption in the next world by spending their lives in service of Him, will remain friends on that day:

"On that day friends shall become enemies one to another, except the God-fearing." (Qur'an, 43:67)

The Existence of God

The greatest proof of the existence of God is the existence of man himself. It is just as farfetched to believe in a being like man as it is to believe in a being of the nature of God. If we believe in man, then there is nothing to stop us from believing in God also.

The Quran tells us that God breathed His spirit into man (15:29). This means that the attributes of God are manifest, in mortal form, in man. Existence, life, knowledge, power, determination and freewill are all attributes that are found in complete form in God. Essentially, these are all divine qualities. God has not given man a share in His attributes but He has created man in His own image; that is, He has made man's being a reflection of the Godhead. Man cannot, in any way, be said to be a part of God, but he is certainly living proof of God's existence. The very same qualities that make God what He is also constitute man. In God these qualities are invisible and infinite; in man they are visible and finite. In order to find God, then, man has only to examine his own being.

Man has a separate existence of his own; he is able to see, hear and speak; he thinks and makes plans; he acts on his own initiative; he converts basic matter into the various forms of advanced civilization; he operates space-ships by remote control; he is a conscious being, fully aware of his own existence. All these attributes, which man possesses in limited form, are present in unlimited and perfect form in God.

The difference between man and God is that man is a part of creation, whereas God is the Creator. Man owes his existence to God, but God owes His existence to no other. Man is finite, God is infinite. Man's power is an illusion, whereas God's is a reality. Man is mortal, God is immortal. Everything man possesses has been given to him, but that which is God's is His very own; none has bestowed it on Him.

To accept man's existence is to accept the existence of one totally unlike God, and yet uncannily like Him; it is to accept the existence of a mini God, so to speak. What is there then to stop us from believing in a great God? To believe in God is to confirm one's own existence. If one believes in oneself, then there is no reason why one should not believe in God. For man to accept his own existence is for him to accept the existence of God, even if he claims to be an unbeliever.

To deny the existence of God is to deny one's own existence. How strange, then, that there are many who claim to disbelieve in God, but no one who would go so far as to disbelieve in his own self.

Man in God's World

Astronomers in California have spent the past decade designing a revolutionary, 10-metre telescope with four times the "seeing power" of any functional scope on earth. They have now received the money-70 million dollars – needed to make the project a reality. It will be called the Keck Observatory, after the W.M. Keck Foundation of Los Angeles who supplied the money. It should be completed by 1993 and will be set up on Hawaii's Mauna Kea.

The telescope, designed by astronomers at the California Institute of Technology and the University of California, Berkeley, will be so powerful that, according to Howard B. Keck, chairman of the foundation, "it will permit one to see the light of a single candle from the distance of the moon." The Keck Telescope will enable astronomers to see objects 12 billion light years away. They will be able to investigate the nature of quasars and explore how galaxies and stars formed. Marvin L. Goldberger president of Caltech says:

"It should provide answers to the most challenging and basic questions of the universe." (*Newsweek*, January 14, 1985).

God has created an incredibly vast universe. He has also given man the power and technology to behold the vastness of His creation. This is so that man may see the universe in all its greatness and wonder at the greatness of the One who created it; so that he may be able to actually see things happening millions of mile away, and thousands of years ago, and be so dazed by the expanse of his vision that he is moved to cry out: "Lord, You have given light to the world. How infinitely more radiant You must be. Lord, You have given man sight. How infinitely more penetrating Your vision must be."

Man's vision itself is proof of the all-reaching vision of God. His own existence is proof of the existence of God. The vastness of the universe is proof of the infinite vastness of God. God has created the world, and man, in His own image. He wants man to be able to look at himself, and the world around him, and see there a reflection of the face of his Lord. He wants man, not only to find answers to questions relating to creation; He wants him to get to know his Creator as well.

When the Ship Comes in

In the 1984 Observer/Europe I Singlehanded transatlantic yacht race, the trimaran of Frenchman Phillippe Poupon was first to cross the line. As he approached the finishing line in Newport, Rhode Island, he was welcomed by a fanfare of boats' horns and sirens; red flares and rockets flashed in the evening sky, welcoming the boat that everyone thought was the winner. Phillippe Poupon shared their belief. He leapt on to the port wing of his trimaran and raised both arms in the air in triumph.

On the following morning another yacht, the 53-foot trimaran of Yvon Fauconnier – Umpuro Jardin Vemerged unannounced and unheralded from the mist. Yet it was this yacht that was to be declared winner of the race. In mid-Atlantic Credit Agricole II, the catmaran of Yvon Fauconnier's countryman Phillippe Jeantot, had capsized. Fauconnier immediately went to his rescue. The operation to right Credit Agricole II took a whole day and Yvon Fauconnier remained on the scene until it had been completed. The race committee heard about the part that Fauconnier had played in Jeantot's rescue, and awarded him a 16-hour compensation. When this was removed from his overall time, Fauconnier was declared winner of the 1984 OSTAR.

The elation of Phillippe Poupon, the apparent winner of the race, turned to anguish. "People will not understand why I am not the winner. I am the first boat. I used to like this race because it was so simple: the winner was the winner. But for me this race is finished." Later at a press conference Poupon put his face behind his hands and wept.

It will be much the same when man's ship crosses the finishing line of time, and when the results of his endeavours in life are announced. There will be one who crosses the finishing line amidst a fanfare of acclaim. He will be the one who made a great show of his piety, who always appeared in the forefront of religious rites and ceremonies. He will appear to be the winner of the race, but there will be another who arrives unheralded and unacclaimed who will emerge triumphant. He is the one who stopped for a while on his way through life to give another a helping hand; who devoted a few hours of his precious time to saving a precious soul; who, far from the spotlights of fame and acclaim, out in the midst of the lonely ocean of life, committed an act of sincere goodwill towards a fellow human being. He will be shown mercy on the Day of Judgment because of the mercy that he showed to others in the world.

On that day it is the last who will indeed be first, and the first who will be last.

Retreat from Marxism

Stalin's image is being systematically improved and resurrected in the Soviet Union today. In a new Soviet feature film about the Bolshevik revolution, Stalin is shown pacing up and down, pressing for decisive military action along with Lenin. This is falsification of history. Actually Trotsky, not Stalin, had collaborated closely with, Lenin in advocating that course.

Why has the Kremlin decided to resurrect Stalin in this manner? At least one important reason is the fact that the Kremlin needs to establish some ideological legitimacy for itself in an era when fewer *and* fewer and fewer people take "official Marxism" seriously.

The Chinese leaders in the post-Mao era are facing a similar problem. China has dealt a fatal blow to the once unquestioned communist party doctrine, declaring officially that it cannot rely on Marxism to build a modern nation.

An unprecedented front-page editorial in the official communist party organ, *People's Daily*, said the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883), founding father of Marxist philosophy, are obsolete

"Marx died 101 years ago. His works were written more than 100 years ago. There have been tremendous changes since his ideas were formed," said the commentary.

"Some of Marx's ideas are no longer suited to today's situation, because Marx never experienced these times, nor did Engels or Lenin."

"And they never came across the problems we face today, so we cannot use Marxist and Leninist works to solve our present-day problems," the commentary said.

The editorial, entitled, "Theory Must be Combined with Practice." said strict adherence to Marxist tenets is "naive and stupid" and detrimental to the nation's ambitious drive for modernisation.

Temple or Factory?

It is said that Somnath Temple, in Gujrat, India, was destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni on January 6, 1026, and then rebuilt. Recently, as the Times of India reported on September 1, 1984, discontent has reared its head at this historic temple. The upkeep of the temple is in the hands of some 125 employees, who are paid between Rs. 250 and Rs. 400 for their services. With the rising cost of living, this amount appeared inadequate, and the temple-servants have gone to the labour court demanding a pay rise.

The president of the temple trust is Mr. Morarji Desai, former Prime Minister of India. He and his colleagues contend that the temple is a religious trust, and its affairs should be dealt with under the Religious Trusts Act. The employees, on the other hand, want their dispute to be settled under the Industrial Disputes Act. They claim that their work comes under the category of industry. Should it be agreed that they are industrial workers, then they will be entitled to certain special privileges, which they would not be able to claim if their dispute was settled under the Religious Trusts Act. They would also be able to take their dispute to the Labour Court, where their demands would be treated with more sympathy. It is thus in the interests of the workers that their dispute should be settled under the Industrial Disputes Act, while as far as the management is concerned it would be better to reach a settlement under the Religious Trusts Act.

It may seem odd that people who are working for a religious cause should be so preoccupied with their worldly interests. If one thinks carefully over the matter, though, one will see that all people of religion – including Muslims – have the same attitude.

Modern Muslim leaders make Islamic teachings sound just as the public wants to hear them, for that is the only way they can win popular support. If they were to follow truth rather than the will of the people, then they would be left stranded without any popular support. They make Islam fit in with the times so that each and every person may join their bandwagon. No one will hop on to their boat if it appears to be swimming against the tide of time.

Religion should be directed towards the next world. But few are ready to adopt religion in this way. Making religion a means of obtaining the next world holds no promise of profit as far as this world is concerned. So everyone makes religion a thing of the world rather than of eternity, a source of material rather than spiritual gain.

It is not only the inmates of Somnath Temple who have made religion a means of obtaining the world. The descendants of the destroyers of Somnath Temple act in exactly the same manner.

The Doctrine of Evolution

It has generally been held, since the time of Charles Darwin (1809 -1882), that the present earth came into existence in the form of lifeless matter and that life began on it later through an evolutionary process. It is on this assumption that the theory of evolution has been based.

It has thus been postulated that the emergence of life on earth dates back 570 million years.

Since World War II this theory has come in for sharp criticism. Numerous researchers have demonstrated that, had life evolved gradually, the estimated period of 570 million years would have been grossly inadequate. Even the total period of the earth's age is not enough for life to have undergone a process involving three different stages culminating in the highest species called man.

Recently a symposium was held in Moscow on August 9, 1984, under the auspices of the 27th International Geological Congress. On this occasion, a Russian scientist, Boris Sokolov, presented a highly significant research paper. Based on purely mathematical and scientific data, it showed that 4000 million years ago, earth and life came into being simultaneously. (*Hindustan Times*, August 11, 1984).

Thus the contemporaneity of earth and life demolished the whole foundation of the doctrine of evolution.

The upholders of the theory of evolution are faced with two difficulties. If they accept the theory that life and earth came into being simultaneously, proof of an evolutionary process is precluded. If they hold the theory that the earth came first and life evolved gradually, they cannot explain away the fact that the period which elapsed between the coming into existence of the earth and of all forms of life is simply too short for this evolutionary process to have taken place.

The task still to be Performed

According to a report from Ottawa, Canada, in the October 25, 1984 issue of *The Muslim* daily (Islamabad), the Islamic Society of North America has purchased, at a price of over 1/2 million dollars, a building near Toronto that will become Canada's first Islamic school.

The school is expected to start functioning by the end of 1984. It is situated in Mississauga, west of Toronto, a town which has a population of some 30,000 Muslims. According to Mohammad Ashraf, director of the ISNA zonal office near Toronto: "The idea is to start schools where Muslim children can study in an Islamic atmosphere."

Institutions of this nature are being established in various parts of the western world where there is a substantial Muslim population. They are a sign of the Muslims' awareness of the need to protect the younger generation of Muslims from encroachment of an unIslamic, worldly and sometimes godless culture.

Important though the function of such institutions undoubtedly is, it is one that falls in the category of preservation of religion, which is a task that Almighty God has promised that He Himself will perform (Qur'an, 15:9). There is another task, however, which God has entrusted to the Muslim community, and that is communication of the message of Islam to other nations of the world (Qur'an, 4:135). Institutions aimed at discharging this responsibility are sadly lacking in countries where they are most needed.

The prophethood of Mohammad, may peace be upon him, is both final (Qur'an, 33:40) and universal (Qur'an, 21:107). His religion is not the monopoly of a few nations, to be preserved within them regardless of whether it reaches others or not. If there is a need to preserve an Islamic atmosphere among born Muslims, there is an even greater need to diffuse an Islamic atmosphere among those who have not yet breathed the life giving air of the word of God, whose souls have been starved of the spiritual nourishment that the Quran provides. Institutions geared to prepare individuals for the performance of this task are urgently needed in both Muslim and non-Muslim areas of the world. Not only will they enable Muslims to discharge the responsibility entrusted to them by God: they will also guarantee the safety of Muslims from all the dangers involved in living in an alien culture; for divine protection, in both spiritual and material spheres of life will only be granted to the Muslims if they communicate the faith as God has commanded them:

"Apostle, proclaim what is revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not, you will not have conveyed His message. God will protect you from all men." (Quran, 5:67)

The Fault of Man, not Religion

One of the main disclosures of modern physics has been that the energy reaching the earth from the sun is the result of nuclear reactions in the centre of the sun. As the physicist Fritjof Capra has written, nuclear processes in the centre of the sun are of particular importance for our planet, "because they furnish the energy which sustains our terrestrial environment." (*The Tao of Physics*, p. 78)

The fact that nuclear energy transmitted by the sun reaches the earth in the form of light and sustenance shows that nuclear energy, when in the hands of nature, is a source of life for the world. But when this same phenomenon comes into the hands of men, it becomes an instrument of death and destruction.

What is the reason for this starkly contrasting state of affairs? It is that nature has no power of its own; whatever it does, conforms exactly to the will of God. Man, on the other hand, has been invested with power and freedom in this world. He can use the resources with which he has been provided for good or evil ends. It is the latter course that he usually adopts.

Just as nuclear energy, when it emanates from nature in the form of sun rays, is a source of light and sustenance for the physical world, so religion, as it is revealed from God, is a source of light and sustenance in the spiritual world: it nourishes man's soul and guides him on the path of eternal salvation.

But just as man has mishandled nuclear energy, so he has mishandled religion. He has used it to perpetrate his own power; to win self-esteem; to accumulate wealth for himself at the expense of others; to spread conflict, hate, division, and suffering in the world.

It would be wrong to blame nuclear energy for the potential destruction which it holds for man, for this is due to man's misuse of it, not to any fault of its own, in the same way it is wrong to blame religion for the ills which man perpetrates in its name. These are the fault of man, not the fault of the divine religion which he corrupts.

The Prophet's Character

According to the French philosopher, Voltaire (1694-1778), "No one is a hero to his valet." The reason for this is that a valet has access to a person's private life, and in private life no one is perfect. Those close to a person do not usually have such a high estimation of a person as those further removed. That is why they cannot come to think of him as a hero. But, as Soren Smith has written, this rule does not apply to the Prophet of Islam. History shows that the closer one became to him, the more one was taken by his fine qualities.

Zaid ibn Haritha was the son of Haritha Ibn Sharaheel, a member of the tribe of Kalb. His mother's name was Suda bint Thalaba. She belonged to a branch of the Tai tribe called Bani Ma'an. When Zaid was eight years old, Suda took him to her parent's home. There some people of the Bani Qayn Ibn Jasr tribe attacked their camp. Amongst the booty that they plundered was Zaid. They then took him to the Ukkaz fair and sold him. The buyer's name was Hakim Ibn Hazam, a nephew of the Prophet Mohammad's wife, Khadija. He brought the child to Mecca and presented him to his aunt as a slave. When the Prophet was married to Kahdija, she entrusted Zaid, who was then 15 years old, to his service. The boy's uncle soon learnt of his whereabouts. They came to Mecca to recover him, and take him home with them. They met the Prophet, and said that they would give any compensation that he required, provided that he returned the child to them. The Prophet said that he did not want any compensation; if Zaid wanted to go with them, they could take him. He called Zaid, and asked him if he knew these people. Zaid said that he did: they were his father and uncle. "They want to take you with them," the Prophet said. "If you want, you can go home with them." "I won't leave you to go anywhere," Zaid replied. His Father and uncle were incensed on hearing this. "What, do you prefer slavery to freedom?" they asked. "Do you want to forsake your own folk, and live amongst others?" "I cannot prefer anyone to Mohammad," Zaid replied, "not after seeing the qualities that he has." His father and uncle then returned to their home.

The Message of the Qur'an

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful

Chapter II (contd.)

When Moses said to his people: 'God commands you to sacrifice a cow,' they replied: 'Are you making game of us? 'God forbid that I should be so foolish,' he rejoined. 'Call on your Lord,' they said, 'to make known to us what kind of cow she shall be.' Moses replied. 'Your Lord says: "Let her neither be an old cow nor a young heifer, but in between." Do, therefore, as you are bidden. 'Call on your Lord,' they said, to make known to us what her colour shall be.' Moses replied: 'Your Lord says: "Let her be yellow, a rich yellow pleasing to the eye." 'Call on your Lord,' they said, 'to make known to us the exact type of cow she shall be; for to us cows look all alike. If God wills we shall be rightly guided.' Moses replied: 'your Lord says: "Let her be a healthy cow, not worn out with ploughing the earth or watering the field; a cow free from any blemish." 'Now you have told us the truth,' they answered. And they slaughtered a cow, after they had nearly failed to do so. And when you slew a man and then fell out with one another concerning him, God made known what you concealed. We said: 'Strike the corpse with a piece of the slaughtered cow.' Thus God restores the dead to life and shows you His signs, that you may grow in understanding (2:67-72).

A murder was committed among the Israelites in Moses' time. The method that God revealed to His prophet for identifying the killer was that a cow should be sacrificed, and the dead man's corpse struck with a piece of it. The dead man would name the murderer. This novel method was chosen for several reasons.

1. The Children of Israel had spent a long time in Egypt, and had been influenced by Egyptian customs and culture. The practice of cow-worship, for instance, had also been adopted by the Israelites, who had also come to regard the cow as 'sacred'. The purpose of Almighty God was to remove this misplaced veneration from their minds, and this murder was chosen as the means: only by sacrificing a cow would the culprit come to light.
2. Another mistake that the Israelites had made was to destroy the simplicity of divine religion by involving themselves in complicated theological wrangling. They had to learn to interpret God's commandments simply and implement them immediately in a straightforward manner. This was another lesson that was taught under the pretext of this murder case: if one engages in hair-splitting efforts to define the exact scope of divine commandments then one will only make things difficult for oneself; added conditions will serve to complicate the implementation of what had originally been a simple commandment.

3. The third lesson of this case was that life after death is no less a reality than life before death. Just as the dead corpse was revived, so every soul will be raised up in the Hereafter and given new life.

Yet after that your hearts became as hard as rocks or even harder; for, from some rocks rivers spring forth: some break asunder and water gushes forth from them: and others tumble down through fear of God. God is not unaware of what you do. (2:74)

Those who seek to make loopholes in God's commandments become more and more insensitive. Their theological arguments lead to hardness of heart. To believe in God is to believe in the most supreme of beings. The moving force of this faith should be enough to rock the soul of a lowly mortal. A man of faith displays his belief in God by stunned silence rather than by pretentious words. Only one who is insensitive to the impact of the word of God will seek to distort it with his own words; only one who lacks awareness of His exalted nature will seek to manipulate His commandments, as if they had emanated from some human source. Such acts lead only to increasing insensitivity, till one's heart becomes as hard as stone. A heart of stone will not melt before the might of the Lord. The thought of God will not excite one who has become insensitive to the Lord's words. Such a soul will not bow before the will of God; it will remain as rigid as a rock.

Stones have been mentioned symbolically in this verse. God has created the world as a source of admonition and remembrance for man. There is a message in everything in nature, a demonstration of how to make one's life conform to the will of God. The message of the universe, however, is conveyed in the form of silent actions; in the Quran, this message has been put into words.

Three aspects of the symbolic meaning of rocks have been mentioned in this verse:

1. One sees on mountains how streams flow from rocks, finally to join together in the form of a river. This is symbolic of a certain type of human being: one in whose heart fear of God is lodged, like water in the bosom of a mountain; this fear of the Lord flows from his eyes in the form of tears, as streams flow down the crags of the hillside.

2. Some rocks seem to be nothing more than dry boulders; but when cracked huge pools of water appear beneath them – wells from which people quench their thirst. This is on a parallel with one who, at first sight, appears to be far from the Lord. Then he is struck by some calamity, which tears his soul apart and reveals the devotion to God that was latent within him.

3. Sometimes one sees landslides on mountains, with great slabs of rock crashing down the hillside. This is comparable to a human being who had adopted an unjust attitude towards another. But, the moment he was reminded of the command of God, he immediately bowed down in humility before His word. Where he had found it difficult to bow before a man like himself, he was more than willing to bow before God.

Man building to destroy

There have been clear signs in the last few years that the countries of the northern hemisphere are becoming hotter. In 1984 unprecedented high temperatures were recorded in, among other places, Britain and East Siberia. In the latter country temperatures rose so high that the permafrost, which had previously kept the ground permanently hard, melted, causing considerable softening of the ground. Buildings in East Siberia had for many years been built in accordance with the rock-like conditions that prevail in the ground. With the melting of the permafrost, ground has become muddy. Buildings have been unable to adapt to the sudden change in ground conditions, and signs of decay have begun to emerge in constructions. The reason for the rise in world temperatures is the disturbance of the carbon dioxide balance in the atmosphere, caused by excessive burning of fossil fuels in the buildings and cars that man constructs for his own use and benefit.

Socialism: an Impractical method of government

Mario Soares, leader of Portugal's socialist party, first came to power in 1976, and was elected in June 1983 for a second term as Portugal's Prime Minister. The first problem that he encountered as ruler of his country was how to introduce Socialism when an ailing economy can only be restored by methods inimical to socialist doctrine. He came to the conclusion that, "We must leave Socialism in the drawer."

The Prophet and His Companions

Not giving oneself priority over one's subjects.

Abu Ubaida Ibn Jarrah was with an army in Syria when the plague struck there. When Umar heard about this, he wrote to Abu Ubaida, saying that he had urgent work with him. "If you receive my letter at night," he wrote, "then I abjure you to set off before the morning, and if you receive it by day, then I abjure you to set off before the night." When Abu Ubaida received the letter he said: "I know what work the commander of the Faithful has with me." He wrote back to Umar, explaining that he was among an army of Muslims, and could not give himself priority over his men. "I know what work you have with me," he wrote. "You want to save one who is doomed. When you receive my letter, forgive me for not complying with your wish and allow me to remain here. Umar burst out weeping when he read this letter. The people around him enquired, "Commander of the Faithful, has Abu Ubaida died?" "No," Umar replied, "but he's as good as dead."

All are equal before the law

An Egyptian came to Umar Ibn Khattab "Commander of the Faithful," he said, "I have come to you to seek shelter from oppression." Umar told him that his request was granted.

"I had a race against Mohammad Ibn Amr Ibn Al-Aas, the son of the governor of Egypt," the man protested. "I overtook him and he got angry. He started whipping me, felling me at the same time: 'Take that! I come from a noble family.'" When Umar heard this, he immediately wrote to Amr Ibn Aas, telling him to bring his son to Medina at once. When they arrived, Umar called the Egyptian, gave him a whip and told him to whip the young man. Umar kept on saying: "Take that, member of a noble family," as he did so. When he had finished whipping Mohammad ibn Amr Ibn Al-Aas, Umar told him to whip the boy's father as well, for the son had only acted because of his father's authority. "I have whipped the one who whipped me", the Egyptian replied. "Now I don't need to whip anybody else". "If you had whipped him, then we would not have stopped you," Umar told him. "But if you let him go yourself, then that is another matter." Then, addressing Amr Ibn Al-Aas, he said: "Since when have you enslaved people who were born free?"

In order to enter the eternal Abode of peace, one must live peacefully on earth

Abu Huraira asked the Prophet to tell him what he could do to be sure of entering heaven. "Spread the word of peace, extend hospitality, cultivate close relationship and stay up at night, when others are asleep; you will enter heaven in peace." the Prophet told him.